

PHONETIC PIONEER.

ing a very extensive knowledge of language. The course was straightforward enough. New letters to represent the 17 deficient ones were invented; the alphabet was reconstructed upon phonetic principles; and then an extensive publicity given to the scheme. The exertions of these gentlemen have been most enthusiastically responded to, and the new art of "sound-writing," or *Phonography*, is everywhere taking its place as one of the recognized promoters of human advancement and human happiness.—Every argument that can possibly be urged against the new mode of spelling has been courteously listened to, and satisfactorily answered.

The originator of the modern system of phonetic spelling has not only, in conjunction with others, contrived the seventeen new letters, and thus perfected the ordinary alphabet, but, before phonetic printing was contemplated, he had devised an entirely new alphabet, so simple, beautiful, and ingenious, that, by means of it, words may be written down in one-sixth of the time which is required by the other way. The new method stands in much the same relation to the amended printing alphabet, that shorthand does to the old or defective mode of writing; but with this difference, that while shorthand is arbitrary and capricious, and often unintelligible a few months after it has been written, the phonetic shorthand is highly philosophical, and can never become unreadable. Doubtless there are many ingenious systems of shorthand, but they are all open to the fatal objection that they only serve their writers as aids to memory for a time, whereas the records written in "sound-hand" are as permanent in their intelligibility as printed books. "Sound-hand," moreover, has the advantage of being able to represent with perfect ease those Anglo-Saxon words which abound with clusters of consonants, such as *scratch, strain, paints, blinds, &c.*, which in ordinary shorthand are extremely difficult.—The rapidity with which sound-hand may be written is equally delightful and amazing. The pen is scarcely outstripped by the ideas which feed it, and old Homer's "winged words," from a poetic figure become an actual and pleasing fact. To those who have ever felt the embarrassment of our present tedious and cumbersome mode of writing, when they have been full of thought, or pressed for time, the new phonetic system is a priceless gift. It is literally "talking on paper." Let it be understood that it differs in no respect as to its principles from the mode of printing, which the amended phonetic alphabet provides for. The difference is simply, that here the various sounds are represented not by letters of complicated form, but by simple lines, curves, and dots. They form indeed a sound alphabet in more than one sense, far more readily learnt than the old one, and quite as legible. It is intended chiefly for manuscripts, as it is unsuited for printing with types, and when it is required to have copies multiplied by the press, lithography must consequently be resorted to. The merit and value claimed for this branch of the phonetic mode of representing words on paper, rests consequently, in its admirable adaptedness to the wants of the penman. How many would rejoice to take down sermons and speeches, if they could but follow the speaker with their pen and ink! And how many bright, and elegant, and animating, and fertilizing thoughts do we often hear in conversation, that are quite lost for want of some ready means of registering them. How many thoughts pass even through our own minds, that are irretrievably lost to us, from the same inability to transcribe them on to paper with a rapidity approaching that of their own development! For the mind of man is never twice in the same position: thousands of combinations of ideas occur at once. It is like a flowing stream;—we never look at the same water twice. The same sky may be reflected there, and the same flowers may bend down from its banks, but the stream itself is ever changing, and ever witnessing new scenes, and receiving new images.

To how many, again, is letter-writing a wearisome and distasteful act. This is the result almost universally, (though it may not be suspected) of the labored and complex orthography which we are called upon to use, and of the length of time required to put down our thoughts. Many persons never think of sitting down to write a letter without a dictionary beside them. Even the most rapid letter-writer feels himself impeded by it, and is driven either to omit in his ideas entirely, or to pause so long in choosing which he can best find room for, that they lose their freshness, and become the tounded periods of the rhetorician, instead of being the earnest, glowing, and unartificial picture of the affections.

We have dwelt thus long on the advantages of phonetic printing to individuals, to show that all persons have an interest in its propagation solely to their own personal pleasure and advantage. But nothing can be truly good for individuals which is not at the same time for the good of the community at large, and, in its widest application, the good of the whole world. Phonographic writing and printing are of this nature. We have shown how great is the value of phonetic printing as a means of teaching children, and especially the children of those whom the laws so brief a period allows for their education. We may conclude by adding that one of the greatest difficulties which man encounters here to contend with, is that of reducing the unwritten languages of savages to a form in which they can have the Scriptures printed. The reason of this is, that at the twenty-six-letter alphabet being defective, there is no knowing how to write given sounds except by combinations which are almost unintelligible to the poor creatures who dwell on the outskirts of civilization, and whose labor is therefore decupled. But by the phonetic system, negroes utterly unacquainted even with the idea of writing have been taught to read in six weeks, a clear proof of the incalculable benefits that may reasonably be expected from a general adoption of the plan. It behoves every one then to assist, according to his means and opportunities, in promoting the great and good work.—The advantages of the electric telegraph, marvellous as they already are, will not be fully developed till phonetic writing is combined with it; for were the words that are transmitted speedily and phonetically, messages or reports could be sent across the country in considerably less time.

Following this we exhibit the new or forty-three-letter alphabet, and also specimens of phonetic spelling. It will probably look a little strange, but was there ever anything novel that did not look strange at first? We may appropriately conclude this sketch of the value of phonetic writing and printing, and the necessity that exists for them, by quoting Lord Bacon's celebrated saying,—"Since things alter for the worse spontaneously, if they be not altered for the better designedly, what end will there be of evil?"—If it be doubted whether it be possible to effect the desired reform, let it be remembered that, with the help of God, whatever is really good is not only possible, but eminently practicable. Nothing can more powerfully help on the cause of truth, and assist in removing the clouds which hang so thickly above society, and thus hasten the advent of what all pure hearts anxiously desire, than the opening of the avenues to genuine, thoughtful, and fruitful knowledge. In the progress which phonetic writing and printing has already made, there is the most certain and cheering guarantee for its ultimate success that can be desired. It makes little noise, certainly, neither does sunrise. Reader, carry out this figure for yourself.—[Adapted from the *English Phonetic Journal*.]

No room for the Phonetic Alphabet this month.

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